

**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
LAKE MANAGEMENT PLAN/
FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT
LAKE MEAD NATIONAL RECREATION AREA**

RECORD OF DECISION

Summary

Pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (Public Law 91-190) and the regulations promulgated by the Council of Environmental Quality (40 CFR Part 1500), the Department of the Interior, National Park Service has prepared this Record of Decision for the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) concerning the management of recreational use on the waters of Lake Mead National Recreation Area. The plan addresses recreational use of approximately 160,000 acres of water contained within the 1.5 million acre national recreation area. The FEIS addresses the recreational issues including recreational carrying capacity and zoning, developed areas and facilities, sanitation and litter, recreational services and visitor conflict affecting the recreational setting. The LMP/FEIS describes a comprehensive programmatic plan to guide managers over the next 15-20 years. The plan has been modified as discussed below based on agency and public comment.

Decision Made

After thorough analysis and extensive public involvement, the National Park Service has determined it will implement Alternative C (the modified preferred alternative in the *Final Environmental Impact Statement*) to help guide the management of Lakes Mead and Mohave because it addresses the NPS mission, as well as the management objectives and long-term vision for both lakes. The need to protect the natural environment and support the recreational interests of park visitors is recognized under this alternative, and specific actions to address personal watercraft use, shoreline and boating conflicts, and litter and sanitation issues are also included under this alternative.

The Lake Management Plan (Alternative C – Modified Preferred) will allow for a slight increase in boating levels (5,055 boats at any one time). Facility expansion could occur at Cottonwood Cove on Lake Mohave and at Callville Bay, Echo Bay, Overton Beach and Temple Bar on Lake Mead. Additional public launch facilities could be constructed at Eldorado Canyon along Lake Mohave and at Stewarts Point on Lake Mead. A new road will be constructed to provide improved access to the north shore of the Boulder Basin on Lake Mead.

The park waters will be managed for a range of recreational settings from primitive to urban. Five percent of the park waters would be managed for primitive and semiprimitive settings, 39% for rural natural, 21% for urban natural and 35% as urban park. The primitive areas will be managed for non-motorized use but will allow electric trolling

motors and semiprimitive areas will be managed for flat wake speed or with a horsepower restriction. Personal watercraft will be prohibited from operating in primitive and semiprimitive settings but authorized to operate in rural natural, urban natural and urban park settings.

Black Canyon will be managed for temporal recreational settings with two days per week being primitive (no motors) and five days per week between Labor Day and Memorial Day as semiprimitive. In Black Canyon where there is a constant river current, the semiprimitive zone flat wake restriction is replaced with an engine size restriction of 65-horsepower or less. Except between Memorial Day and Labor Day, when Black Canyon will be managed as rural natural, unrestricted boating access will be provided five days per week (due to the narrow canyon environment, houseboats, wake boarding and water skiing are prohibited).

A 200-foot flat wake zone will be established around beaches occupied by bathers, boats at the shoreline and persons in the water or at the shoreline. This is to establish a safe shoreline environment for shoreline users. The National Park Service will work with the respective states to develop uniform boating laws on Lakes Mead and Mohave and pursue mandatory boating education programs. Alcohol consumption while operating a boat will be prohibited.

Sanitation and public education requirements will be implemented and a clean-up program initiated. Glass beverage containers and styrofoam will be prohibited within the recreation area.

Water quality will be enhanced by requiring all boaters camping overnight to possess a marine head or portable toilet. Further, the NPS will require exclusive use of four-stroke engines, the new direct injection two-stroke engines, or equivalent, for motorized vessels starting December 31, 2012.

Synopsis of Alternatives Considered

The four alternatives analyzed in the *Draft and Final Environmental Impact Statements / Lake Management Plan* were developed by the interdisciplinary planning team of Lake Mead National Recreation Area after careful consideration of extensive public input. The team developed the criteria to characterize the recreational opportunity spectrum (described above) zoning and then mapped the zones on Lakes Mead and Mohave. The next step included developing the desired future conditions and alternatives to achieve those conditions. Once the alternatives were drafted, the team met with a wide variety of user groups to seek feedback on the alternatives. In 1998, five public meetings were held and the alternatives were presented to the public. Following these public informational meetings, the alternatives were modified to the four described below. Regarding personal watercraft use, the alternatives ranged from prohibiting personal watercraft under alternative A to unrestricted use of personal watercraft under alternative D. Each alternative proposed actions related to recreational opportunity zoning and shoreline zoning, developed areas, facilities and recreational services, recreational conflict,

sanitation and litter, resource protection, and park operations. In the development of the *Final Environmental Impact Statement / Lake Management Plan*, the existing level of public and commercial services was accepted as the baseline. None of the alternatives considered a reduction in launch capacities, as there was no justification to do so from a physical or social carrying capacity perspective.

Alternative A (No-action Alternative)

Alternative A was analyzed as the no-action alternative and represents the management direction under the 1986 *Lake Mead National Recreation Area General Management Plan*. Under this alternative, park managers would manage increasing use in accordance with the *General Management Plan*, affecting the ability to provide for a spectrum of recreational settings. Improvements would be made only on an as-needed basis as funding becomes available. Required improvements for safety, facilities, conflict resolution, sanitation, litter, and resource preservation would be undertaken without a coordinated strategy and funding initiative.

Under this alternative, no unit-specific rule would be developed for the continued use of personal watercraft. Therefore, in accordance with *Bluewater Network v. Robert Stanton* (No. CV02093) and the settlement agreement approved by the court on April 12, 2001, personal watercraft would be prohibited within Lake Mead National Recreation Area. All other watercraft would be permitted anywhere on the lake with the exception of existing shoreline zoning areas along Boulder Beach on Lake Mead, Black Canyon on Lake Mead, Black Canyon on Lake Mohave and in areas specially restricted by markers or buoys.

Alternative B

If implemented, alternative B would provide for the most primitive recreational opportunities for visitors while protecting sensitive natural and cultural resources. Compared with other alternatives, greater limitations would be placed on motorized water recreation. All carbureted two-stroke engines, including personal watercraft, would be banned from the recreation area within a year of finalizing this plan. The development of new facilities would be limited compared to the other alternatives, and some uses would be reduced or eliminated from some areas. The restoration of natural shoreline areas that have been degraded through overuse is emphasized.

Alternative C

As explained earlier, this Record of Decision supports implementation of this modified preferred alternative because it addresses the NPS mission as well as the management objectives and long-term vision for Lakes Mead and Mohave. The need to protect the natural environment and support the recreational interests of park visitors is recognized under this alternative. Under this alternative, 5% of the waters would be managed for semiprimitive or primitive, yet provide for an increase in boating activities. Two-stroke engines would be allowed on the waters, but would be required to be in compliance with the 2006 EPA emission standards by December 31, 2012. Specific actions to address personal watercraft use, shoreline and litter and sanitation issues are addressed under this alternative.

Alternative D (Baseline Alternative)

This alternative emphasizes growth with a corresponding reduction in the variety of recreational opportunities on the lakes. The waters of the recreation area would be managed for concentrated use with a greater percentage designated as urban park under the recreational opportunity spectrum, and no areas would be designated as primitive or semiprimitive. With the increase in urban park zoning, there could be an increase in marina and boat launching facilities. There would be limited opportunities for shoreline restoration under this alternative.

Description of the Environmentally Preferred Alternative

Alternative C is also the “environmentally preferred” alternative because, overall, it would best meet the requirements of section 101 of the *National Environmental Policy Act*. It would help provide a wide range of beneficial uses without degradation and would improve the safety of the recreation area. This alternative would preserve important natural aspects of our national heritage while providing an environment that supports diversity and a variety of individual choices. The selected action (alternative C) satisfies the requirements of section 101 of the *National Environmental Policy Act*, which are to:

Fulfill the responsibilities of each generation as trustee of the environment for succeeding generations

Ensure for all generations safe, healthful, productive, and aesthetically and culturally pleasing surroundings

Attain the widest range of beneficial uses of the environment without degradation, risk of health or safety, or other undesirable or unintended consequences

Preserve important historic, cultural, and natural aspects of our national heritage, and maintain, wherever possible, an environment that supports diversity and variety of individual choice

Achieve a balance between population and resource use that will permit high standards of living and a wide sharing of life’s amenities, enhance the quality of renewable resources, and approach the maximum attainable recycling of depletable resources

Decision Rationale

The NPS determined that the selected action (Alternative C) provides the greatest benefit to both the biological and human environments in the parks and the surrounding communities. Based upon detailed environmental analysis and with consideration of American Indian tribe, public, and agency comments on all four alternatives, this alternative was deemed to achieve best the mandates of the NPS to ensure long-term natural and cultural resource preservation, while accommodating appropriate levels of

visitor use and providing appropriate means of visitor enjoyment. It is the option which best reconciles the many needs and desires expressed by extremely diverse reviewers (including neighboring communities, American Indian tribes and groups, advocacy groups, regional, state, and national publics, and multiple local, state and federal agencies). The selected action best achieves the numerous goals and objectives which guided this conservation planning/impact analysis process, and fulfills the purposes of the parks as described in the legislation that established Lake Mead National Recreation Area.

Carrying Capacity

The carrying capacity analysis in the Lake Management Plan defined the type and level of visitor use that can be accommodated while sustaining the desired resource and visitor experience conditions in the park. The use levels prescribed in the selected alternative provides for a range of recreational settings. By identifying and staying with carrying capacities, the park can prevent park uses that may unacceptably impact the resources, the visitor experience, and values for which the parks were established. To ensure use continues at acceptable and sustainable levels, the indicators and standards used in determining the carrying capacity will be monitored. The carrying capacity will guide park managers in determining the size and extent of lake access facilities.

Northshore Loop Road

The Northshore Loop Road will address the increasing impact of a sprawling network of dirt roads being created to access the shoreline of the northern portion of the Boulder Basin. This new road will eliminate approximately 20 miles of gravel road and provide shoreline access amenities similar to those that exist along Lakeshore Drive where additional shoreline access and shoreline enhancements have greatly improved the shoreline setting.

Park Zoning

One of the objectives of this planning effort is to zone the waters for a variety of recreational settings ranging from primitive to urban. The selected action provides a mix of recreational settings proposed.

The uses in the Primitive Zone (1% of lake waters) were amended from the DEIS to allow increased access consistent with the desired setting by authorizing the use of electric trolling motors.

The Semiprimitive Zone was increased from 2% of the park waters to 4% of the park waters through the addition of Bonelli Bay in the Virgin Basin and the waters of the Overton Wildlife Management Area in the upper portion of the Overton Arm. This increase was in response to public comment that additional waters should be managed as primitive or semiprimitive zones. Uses in the Semiprimitive Zone on Lake Mead were modified to increase access by authorizing boats to operate at a flat wake speed instead of the originally proposed 65-horsepower limitation.

Black Canyon, north of Willow Beach, will be managed for a variety of recreational settings. The preferred alternative was modified to increase boater access by providing unrestricted boater access during the peak boating season between Memorial Day and Labor Day. This area will be managed for a primitive setting (non-motorized use) two days per week year-round and for a semiprimitive setting (65-horsepower or less) for the five days per week between Labor Day and Memorial Day. Additional non-motorized launches will be authorized under the primitive and semiprimitive settings. This zoning will provide for a mix of recreational settings and corresponding recreational activities in Black Canyon.

Overnight Vehicle Camping at the Shoreline

Existing shoreline camping areas at Kingman Wash, Mile 8.0 on Northshore Road, Crawdad Cove and Boxcar Cove will be closed to overnight camping as these areas are located in drainages and are subject to flooding. Shoreline camping in the Boulder Basin will be authorized at Government Wash where facilities can be developed to support this camping use. These facilities include the addition of designated use areas, access roads, sanitation facilities, garbage facilities and barriers to provide for protection of the native resources. If the developed shoreline camping area is successful at providing shoreline camping opportunities and protecting park resources, this concept may be developed in the 8.0 Cove area opposite Government Wash.

Personal Watercraft Use

The LMP/FEIS analyzed each of the resource categories identified in the settlement agreement (water quality, air quality, soundscapes, wildlife and wildlife habitat, shoreline vegetation, and visitor conflict and safety) and included all reference information identified in the public comments and found negligible to minor impact. Personal watercraft use will be authorized in the Rural Natural, Urban Natural and Urban Park zones. These zones comprise 95% of park waters. This use will be authorized based on detailed modeling and analysis showing continued use of these craft will not impair park resources and values when operated consistent with this plan. Personal watercraft use will not be authorized in Primitive and Semiprimitive Zones. It was important to identify areas where visitors could go on the lakes where they could experience the lake setting independent of personal watercraft. The planning process concluded that it was important to identify areas where park visitors could escape the sounds associated with personal watercraft and enjoy a more tranquil setting. This plan provides 5% of the lake waters for this purpose.

Boating in Proximity

The 100-foot flat wake zone around the entire lake that was proposed in the DEIS has been modified in consultation with the Nevada Division of Wildlife and the Arizona Department of Game and Fish to a 200-foot flat wake zone around beaches occupied by bathers, boats at the shoreline and people in the water or at the shoreline. This revision is similar to Nevada boating law. The goal in making this revision is to allow for the development of uniform boating laws between the state and federal agencies for boating on the waters of Lake Mead NRA while ensuring visitor safety and a quality visitor experience.

Alcohol Consumption and Boater Education

Boat operators will not be allowed to consume alcohol while operating a boat on Lakes Mead and Mohave. The NPS will propose a rule that boat operators will not be able to consume alcohol while operating a boat. This rule will be recommended for inclusion in all boating education courses provided through the states of Arizona and Nevada. This plan supports state boating education programs and recommends that states adopt mandatory education programs.

Sanitation and Litter

The NPS will propose a rule requiring the use of portable toilets for all boaters who camp overnight on Lakes Mead and Mohave. Implementation of this rule will require extensive public education. Park management will develop an implementation strategy to provide proper notification and education.

The use of glass and Styrofoam containers will be prohibited with Lake Mead NRA. The use of glass containers has proven to be a health hazard to park visitors on the beaches and Styrofoam accumulates along the shoreline where it can have an impact on aquatic wildlife. Education will be an important element in the implementation of these programs. These steps will provide for the safe use and enjoyment of the shoreline environment of Lakes Mead and Mohave.

Use of Two-stroke Engines

The use of carbureted two-stroke engines will be prohibited on December 31, 2012. These marine engines have been shown by the Environmental Protection Agency to be inefficient, allowing 25% of the fuel to be discharged directly into park waters. EPA prohibits the manufacture of these engines in 2006, when all marine spark ignition engines will have to meet higher operating standards. On December 31, 2012, all engines will be required to meet these EPA manufacturer standards for operation on Lakes Mead and Mohave. This approximate ten-year time frame is proposed to allow adequate time to inform the public and allow for a timely conversion to the more efficient engine technology.

Finding on Impairment of Park Resources and Values

The National Park Service has determined that implementation of alternative C, the modified preferred alternative, will not constitute impairment of park resources and values at Lake Mead NRA. In reaching this determination the park's enabling legislation (P.L. 88-639), General Management Plan (NPS 1986), and Strategic Plan (NPS 1999) were reviewed to ascertain the park's purpose and significance, resource values, and resource management goals or desired future conditions; the management objectives specific to resource protection goals at the park were identified; thresholds were established for each resource of concern to determine the context, intensity, and duration of impacts; and an analysis was conducted to determine if the magnitude of the impact reached the level of impairment defined in NPS Management Policies (NPS 2001). Based on a thorough analysis of the environmental impacts described in the Final

Environmental Impact Statement/Lake Management Plan, the public comments received, and the application of the provisions of the 2001 NPS Management Policies, the NPS has concluded that the implementation of the modified preferred alternative would not result in impairment of any of the resources and values of Lake Mead NRA.

NPS Management Policies requires analysis of potential effects to determine whether the actions would impair park resources. As stated in Management Policies section 1.4.5.,

The impairment that is prohibited...is an impact that, in the professional judgment of the responsible NPS manager, would harm the integrity of park resources or values, including the opportunities that otherwise would be present for the enjoyment of those resource or values. Whether an impact meets this definition depends on the particular resources and values that would be affected; the severity, duration, and timing of the impact; the direct and indirect effects of the impact; and the cumulative effects of the impact in question and other impacts.

Any impact to any park resource or value may constitute an impairment. An impact would be more likely to constitute an impairment to the extent that it affects a resource or value whose conservation is:

- Necessary to fulfill specific purposes identified in the establishing legislation or proclamation of the park;
- Key to the natural or cultural integrity of the park or to opportunities for enjoyment of the park; or
- Identified as a goal in the park's general management plan or other relevant NPS planning documents.

When fully implemented, the modified preferred alternative would not impair resources or values. Although negative impacts could occur under this alternative to air quality, water resources, shoreline vegetation, wildlife, wildlife habitat, soundscape and visitor use, the predicted impacts are at acceptable levels, generally short term, and may be mitigated through management actions. Furthermore, this alternative would not significantly impact a resource or value whose conservation is 1) necessary to fulfill specific legislative purposes; 2) key to the natural or cultural integrity of the park or to opportunities for enjoyment of the park; or 3) identified as a goal in the park's general management plan or other relevant NPS planning document.

Based on the evaluation in the Final Environmental Impact Statement/Lake Management Plan the NPS believes the modified preferred alternative would not constitute impairment to park resource or values. As set forth in the modified preferred alternative, monitoring and adaptive management practices are fundamental to this alternative. For example, the Final Environmental Impact Statement/Lake Management Plan identified thresholds related to air and water quality. With monitoring by NPS staff, NPS can determine the effect of park activities and if impacts to these resources are approaching these thresholds, then park managers can take the necessary and appropriate action to protect the resources, including temporal and permanent closing areas in order to protect those

park resources. The monitoring plan and other mitigating measures are described further below and demonstrate how these measures will prevent impairment of park resources and values.

Finally, the modified preferred alternative also protects air and water quality by prohibiting the use of all carbureted two-stroke engines at Lake Mead NRA by 2012. After 2012, only the cleaner, advance technology engine types that meet the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) stricter emission standards will be allowed to use the waters of Lake Mead NRA. This requirement will mandate that all motorized use on the waters of Lake Mead NRA will be using improved emission control engines that will minimize impacts and together with monitoring will prevent impairment of park resources and values.

Description of Mitigating Measures and Monitoring Plans/Steps to Minimize Harm

An important element of this NPS-selected action (alternative C) is the protection it would provide for the sensitive resources that are found in the waters or along the shorelines of Lakes Mead and Mohave. These areas are sensitive due to the habitat they provide for fish, bird, and mammal reproduction. Continued productivity is dependent on the protection of this sensitive habitat. Measures to avoid or minimize environmental impacts that could result from implementation of this selected alternative have been identified and incorporated into the selected action. These mitigation measures as presented in the *Final Environmental Impact Statement / Lake Management Plan*, are described by category below.

Administrative operations, such as maintenance of buoys and environmental monitoring and patrols, are authorized and not limited under this plan.

Inflow Areas

The selected action provides for the protection of the sensitive inflow areas (sic). The selected action provides for the protection of the sensitive inflow areas of Lake Mead including the tributaries of the Muddy and Virgin Rivers on the Overton Arm. The area of the confluence of the Muddy River and the lake would be managed in cooperation with the State of Nevada, as a semiprimitive area (flat-wake speed), and the confluence of the Virgin River and the lake would be managed as a primitive setting allowing only electric trolling motors.

Shoreline Enhancement

This alternative would provide for some shoreline enhancement projects, which are identified in the park's *Resource Management Plan*, that address the removal of salt cedar in priority areas, as well as the reestablishment of willows in certain locations along the Lake Mohave shoreline. Adaptive management techniques, such as pruning salt cedar to provide shade for the establishment of other species, may be used to control salt cedar and provide additional beach environment. This and other techniques have been used successfully in the Black Canyon area of Lake Mohave.

Water Quality

The monitoring of water quality within Lake Mead National Recreation Area is currently in accordance with state of Arizona and state of Nevada recreational water quality standards. Bacterial water sampling will continue for high-use areas within the urban park zones. Sampling of the more remote zones of the park will continue on a nonscheduled basis with parkwide sampling completed at least once during the high-visitation period. Ongoing water monitoring programs will continue. Studies will continue at the Virgin River inflow area and various areas of the lake where water clarity is being monitored.

Under the selected alternative, a monitoring program will be developed along with recreational water standards for lake management. Specific areas might require temporal or seasonal closures to maintain the high water quality standards for recreation. Lake Mead National Recreation Area will seek funding for monitoring of pathogens and contaminants associated with both gray- and black-water releases, and work with the U.S. Geological Survey to further study the distribution and impact of contaminants associated with personal care products released in gray water. The National Park Service plans to work with the states of Nevada and Arizona for the development of consistent regulations across both states to protect the existing high water quality of Lakes Mead and Mohave. If research and monitoring shows that gray-water discharge from vessels becomes a threat to exceedance of water quality standards, regulations would be developed to prohibit the activity.

The National Park Service will continue to keep abreast of the technology in this field and provide guidance for all concessioners and individual business permittees, as well as the general public who are involved in boat maintenance, commercial operations, and commercial and private fueling.

Increased boater education and the enforcement of applicable regulations will take place in an effort to reduce fuel spillage during shoreline refueling operations and to improve the water quality in high-use areas.

The National Park Service will develop a monitoring plan that would include several targeted constituents of gasoline and related degradation products, including some PAH (polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons). The monitoring plan will focus efforts on high-use areas on Lakes Mead and Mohave. The National Park Service will evaluate the operation of all facilities on Lakes Mead and Mohave. Specific locations might require temporal or seasonal closures if monitoring identifies areas of concern not meeting water quality standards. The development of a monitoring plan will be consistent with the interests of local, state, and federal agencies.

Protection of Razorback Suckers and Bonytail Chub

The National Park Service will continue to monitor boat use during the spawning period. If use of known spawning sites increases dramatically, or if the federal managers on the Native Fish Work Group recommend action, the spawning sites will be closed to boating activity during spawning season. Buoys and/or markers would be utilized for closing the

areas. In addition, if existing grow-out ponds are being vandalized, the beaches adjacent to these areas would be closed to visitor use during the grow-out periods.

Information will be provided to the marinas about native fish, and included with their houseboat and boat rental information. Houseboat users will be encouraged to beach at areas other than known spawning sites.

On Lake Mead, the back bay of Echo Bay will be closed to boat use during the razorback spawning period between December 1 and May 1. The mooring field will be eliminated from this area, and temporary buoys and signage will be placed on the water, in accordance with National Park Service biologists' recommendations, based on the fluctuating water levels, and the location of spawning areas. Press notifications and signage at the marina will include educational information on native fish.

Marina expansion is proposed at Cottonwood Cove on Lake Mohave, and specific compliance will occur during the development concept planning process. The National Park Service will initiate razorback sucker monitoring during the 2002 to 2003 winter season to determine if razorback suckers are utilizing the shoreline area around Cottonwood Cove and Ski Cove. National Park Service biologists will use SCUBA to survey the proposed expansion site and include this area with annual razorback sucker monitoring activities.

In addition, marina operators are required to follow the "Best Management Practices, Watercraft and Marina Operations, Dry Boat Storage, and Boat Repair Services," for Lake Mead National Recreation Area.

Protection of Southwestern Willow Flycatchers

A monitoring program will be implemented for the Southwestern willow flycatcher, in accordance with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service protocol, during the breeding season in potential habitat. If breeding pairs or nesting sites are found during these surveys, the areas will be closed to restrict recreational use. This will prevent the disturbance from any type of vessel and any type of human disturbance, such as camping. Lake access to these areas will be closed using buoys and markers, and access roads that lead to the sites will temporarily be closed.

Protection of Desert Tortoises

Mitigation, based on past consultations with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, including the Lakeshore and Northshore Road projects, is required for all projects within desert tortoise habitat at Lake Mead National Recreation Area. This mitigation includes tortoise education requirements and measures to minimize adverse effects such as habitat loss, degradation, and fragmentation; direct mortality from construction activities; and raven predation on tortoises.

Sensitive Plant Species

Four sensitive plant species, the sticky buckwheat, three-sided milkvetch, Las Vegas bearpoppy, and sticky ringstem, occur in sandy soils along the shoreline of Lake Mead in areas receiving heavy recreational use. In addition, smoke tree and *Trixis californica* (no

common name) occur in areas receiving heavy recreational use along Lake Mohave. These populations will be monitored, and where an unacceptable impact (such as trampling or cutting) from visitor use is identified, special management steps will be taken to protect this habitat.

Cultural Resources

Both prehistoric and historic resources are known to occur along the shorelines of Lakes Mead and Mohave. A system to monitor the sites along the shorelines is being developed and will continue under the selected action. To ensure protection of these resources, special zones might be applied that will limit recreational activities where sensitive resources were identified.

To protect cultural resources and to comply with the *National Historic Preservation Act*, all proposed projects will be evaluated to determine the area of potential effect. These areas will be inventoried for significant cultural resources, and a determination will be made as to what impact the project will have on the historic qualities of the resources. Through consultation with project designers, affiliate tribal entities, the respective State Historic Preservation Offices, and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, a plan will be developed to avoid or mitigate impacts.

Description of Public Involvement in Decision-making Process

Public meetings were initiated in January 1993 to help identify and summarize significant issues related to the management of Lakes Mead and Mohave. A notice of intent was published in the *Federal Register* on May 3, 1993. Between January 1993 and September 2000, public scoping meetings, public informational meetings, and presentations on the development of the lake management plan were held throughout the area.

The main public scoping meetings were held between October and December 1994. The meeting locations included Las Vegas, Henderson, Boulder City, and Overton, Nevada; Kingman, Bullhead City, and Meadview, Arizona; Riverside, California; and St. George, Utah. A mailing list of interested parties was compiled from attendees at the meetings and from any written comments received at the recreation area. In December 1996, a scoping issues newsletter was mailed to interested parties to provide an update on the issues related to the development of the plan. Public informational meetings were held in 1998 from May through July to provide more information on the development of the plan. During the entire planning process, NPS personnel were available to meet with any interested public to provide presentations related to the lake management plan. Presentations were made to over 100 organizations, including local, county, state, and federal agencies, tribal representatives, concessioners, and various clubs.

Public Open Houses and Comment Opportunities

Following the April 2002 release of the *Draft Environmental Impact Statement / Lake Management Plan*, there was a 60-day public review and comment period on the document. The Notice of Availability was published in the *Federal Register* on April 24, 2002 and the 60-day review period ended on June 26, 2002. After the distribution of the document, from May 13 to 23, public open houses were held in Meadview, Bullhead

City, and Kingman, Arizona; and Overton, Las Vegas, and Boulder City, Nevada. Comment sheets were provided for people to submit written comments, and a stenographer was on hand to record verbal comments. The public was also encouraged to comment via the Internet at LAME_LMP@nps.gov.

Interagency Consultations

The National Park Service met with representatives of the Nevada Division of Wildlife and Arizona Game and Fish Department concerning lake zoning and boating regulations on Lakes Mead and Mohave. The Park Service attended a specific meeting with the Nevada Wildlife Advisory Board, as well as meeting with state agency representatives from both Nevada and Arizona. The NPS briefed the Colorado River law enforcement agencies at their annual meeting on January 23, 2003.

Tribal Consultations

Tribal consultations were initiated in March 1996 at the Tribal Consultation Meeting in Laughlin, Nevada. Coordination meetings with the Hualapai Nation occurred in December 1997, April 1998, August 1999, and September 2000, and components of the lake management plan were presented at those meetings. Presentations were also given at the Tribal Consultation Meeting in August 1998, at the Colorado River Indian Tribal Meeting in November 1998, and at the Native American Tribal Consultation Meeting in March 1999. Participating tribes at one or more of these meetings included the Southern Paiute Consortium, including the Las Vegas Southern Paiute, Las Vegas Indian Center, Pahrump, Moapa, Kaibab, and Paiute Indian Tribes of Utah; and the Colorado River Groups, including the Chemhuevoi, Mojave, Quechan, Maricopa, Ak Chin, CRIT, Hopi, Navajo, Zuni, Havasupai, and Yavapai.

Public Notification

Lake Mead National Recreation Area followed the NPS policies and procedures for public notification concerning this planning effort. Notices of availability were published in the *Federal Register* by both the National Park Service and the Environmental Protection Agency. Press releases or articles were published in all newspapers in regions surrounding Lake Mead National Recreation Area. These include the Las Vegas Review Journal, Las Vegas Sun, Moapa Valley Progress, Kingman Miner, Meadview News, Laughlin Times, Mohave Valley Daily News, and the Boulder City News.

The public had improved access to this planning process through the use of the Lake Mead National Recreation Area web site. Both the DEIS and FEIS were posted on the web site and received up to 500 hits per day during the advertised review periods. Press releases and question and answer pages containing pertinent visitor use information were added to the web page over the life of the planning process.

Representatives of Lake Mead National Recreation Area were interviewed on all Las Vegas television stations as part of regional news casts and special interviews, and information was included on the CBS Face to Face program in Las Vegas and on the Morning Show in Laughlin. Most of these were shown multiple times as part of various news broadcasts. There were also letters to the editor published in many of the

newspapers. In addition, the National Park Service provided supplemental press releases announcing the public meetings.

More than 10,000 letters were received during the public review period. Of these, 8,474 were form letters on 10 separate form letter formats, 1,384 were individual letters and over 6,500 were electronic mail, and 792 were signatures on 8 separate petitions. Comments received included 9,153 from individuals, 30 from businesses, 813 from organizations and 17 from public agencies. All comments were duly considered and adjustments were made to the final plan.

Approximately 255 copies of the LMP/FEIS were mailed to those on the project mailing list and to those individuals who submitted substantive comments on the LMP/DEIS. An additional 250 copies have been mailed upon request following the publication of the notice of availability. The LMP/FEIS was distributed to over 30 regional libraries and was also posted on the Lake Mead NRA web page. The Notice of Availability for the LMP/FEIS was published in the *Federal Register* on January 17, 2003.

During the 30-day period following the publication of the Lake Management Plan/Final Environmental Impact Statement, there were a number of comments received. These took the form of letters, e-mails, form letters as well as telephone conversations. There are some technical corrections that have been identified during this period and revisions have been incorporated into Table 22 (Commercial Marina Services at Lake Mohave) where the number of rental boats at Willow Beach has been revised to 25 in place of 18 and the number of rental houseboats at Cottonwood Cove has been revised to 40 in place of 22. For Black Canyon recreational zoning where semiprimitive conditions are identified, boats are limited to 65 horsepower or less. This statement has been revised to acknowledge that monitoring recreational use and changes in technology may allow for adjustments to the horsepower restriction as long as the conditions of the semiprimitive recreational setting can be achieved.

The Sierra Club expressed concern that at lower lake elevations the areas designated as primitive and semiprimitive settings diminish. A letter supporting the proposal was received from the Nevada State Historic Preservation Office.

A letter was received from the Bluewater Network stating there was misrepresentation of their previous comments, the disregard of scientific research, the LMP/FEIS is not in compliance with the settlement agreement, the phase out of two-stroke engines should be accelerated and there was too heavy reliance on economic impacts. A specific statement concerning PAH was identified by the Bluewater Network dealing with water quality on page 116. This statement has been removed from the FEIS. Their letter encourages the NPS amend the FEIS to adopt alternative B with a ban on PWC operation.

The LMP/FEIS analyzed each of the resource categories identified in the settlement agreement (water quality, air quality, soundscapes, wildlife and wildlife habitat, shoreline vegetation, and visitor conflict and safety) and included all reference information identified in the public comments and found negligible to minor impact. Boating

inventories are completed annually so the NPS is aware of the general composition of the boating fleet. Therefore, the NPS is proceeding with the implementation of the proposed action that includes the establishment of recreational zoning and carrying capacity to protect sensitive resource areas, the implementation of a 200-foot flat wake zone around people in the water and boats at the shoreline, activity-specific shoreline zoning in urban areas, support of State administered mandatory boating education programs and the phase-out of carbureted two-stroke engines.

The plan will be implemented in phases over the next two to three years. The final rulemaking to authorize personal watercraft use is scheduled to be published immediately while separate rulemaking will be pursued to implement the other components of the plan.

CONCLUSION

Alternative C, the selected action, provides the most comprehensive and proactive strategy among the alternatives considered for meeting the National Park Service's purposes, goals, and criteria for managing the waters of Lake Mead National Recreation Area in accordance with Congressional direction, federal laws, and NPS Management Policies. As noted, the plan was finalized based on public comment and agency consults. The selection of modified alternative C, as reflected by the analysis contained in the *Final Environmental Impact Statement / Lake Management Plan*, would not result in the impairment of park resources and would allow the National Park Service to conserve park resources and provide for their enjoyment by park visitors.

Approved: _____/Signed/_____ **Date:** March 12, 2003
Jonathan B. Jarvis
Regional Director, Pacific West Region, National Park Service